

DELAWARE COMMISSION OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
MEETING MINUTES
July 24, 2007

Members Present: Ennis, Carroll, Endres, Harden, Lank, Lardizzone, Magner, Newstadt, Spitzfaden, Thompson, Wasson and Webb

Members Excused: Morris, Kitson, and Timberman

Staff Present: Davila and Reid

Guests: Al Carter (SOS), Richard Citron (VAMC Director), Connie McCarthy (WHYY), Burton Barr (NARFE), Cullen Beaudin (Elks Lodge 2540), Ron Sarg (MOAA), and Ed Moczulski (LP Lo-DEL)

The meeting opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to our Nations Flag.

Vice-Chairman Ennis opened the meeting by reporting that Chairman Morris was involved in a motorcycle accident over the past weekend. He is currently in Kent General and will be recuperating for approximately 5-6 weeks. Also, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs will be resigning his position not later than October 1, 2007. Introduced guests.

McCarthy – Beginning in September, all the PBS stations around the country will begin to air a series called “The War”, a Ken Burns film. In conjunction with that, WHYY is holding an event on September 10, 2007, 5:00-7:00 pm, at the Public Archives building in Dover. WHYY will be showing a preview of the series, but also hoping to honor the contributions of Delaware’s WWII veterans. They are also working in conjunction with The News Journal to promote an essay contest for WWII veterans and/or family members. The submissions will be compiled by The News Journal and some of those stories will be printed. WHYY will also feature some of those stories on the nightly newscasts. They will also be hosting an event on November 8, 2007, to recognize those veterans. WHYY is also working in conjunction with the Library of Congress, Veterans History Project. “The War” series will begin being aired on September 23, 2007, and run over several weeks.

Barr – Provided a letter to each Commissioner to share with their respective organization concerning prayer for military personnel serving overseas. He also provided information about “Operation Landstuhl”, the Army hospital in Germany is in need of assistance. The American Legion is currently raising funds to assist in this effort. Mr. Barr spent the last two weeks of the legislative session vying for the three bills pertaining to veterans issues, with no success.

Beaudin - The Elks Lodge (Lewes) is getting their members involved in the new Veterans Home.

Moczulski – The Listening Post – Lower Delaware (LP Lo-Del) program comes under People’s Place, which is a contracted through the Delaware Commission of Veterans Affairs. Provided a report to the Commissioners pertaining to the services provided to Delaware veterans.

Spitzfaden – Provided a correction to the June Commission meeting minutes. He referred to SB 95 (veterans income tax exemption for the State) which was submitted during the 143rd General Assembly. The bill should have been updated to reflect the 144th General Assembly as SB 48 and HB 97 in the House.

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER HARDEN TO ACCEPT JUNE COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES WITH CORRECTION AS STATED, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER WASSON, MOTION CARRIED.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

CEMETERY COMMITTEE

Newstadt – The Family Advisory Cemetery Committee (FACC), Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Sussex County, will meet August 22, 2007, 6:00 pm. The Northern FACC will meet on October 17, 2007, 1:00 pm. The issue of the bronze tree and bench markers for the Northern Cemetery has been resolved. Mr. Davila reported that an RFP had been advertised for the bid process that will end on July 31, 2007. Commissioner Newstadt reported that in 1952 the USAF opened a base in Tripoli, Libya. American citizen's remains in an Italian cemetery are being relocated and the USAF has requested to inter these military dependents (two adults and 48 infants) in our Southern Cemetery. The USAF will bear all costs involved. Mr. Davila reported that Mr. Randy Keel with the Department of the Air Force Mortuary Services, San Antonio, TX, will make a site visit on Friday. Once the Commission approves this effort, interment will begin as soon as possible. Mr. Davila discussed improvements at the Northern Cemetery and the Southern Cemetery received \$252,000 for the ten-year expansion project.

COMMEMORATIVE AFFAIRS

No report.

FINANCE AND LOGISTICS

No report.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Reid – There are currently nine residents in the Veterans Home. There will be two more individuals being admitted this week. Admissions for the Dementia unit will be accepted in August 2007. There are currently 115 staff members; 16% are veterans. The Home is licensed to participate in Medicare and Medicaid. We will be providing a presentation at the VFW Convention this weekend. He provided a copy of the updated donations listing to each Commissioner. Mr. Reid provided a report on past and future activities for the residents. Mr. Dan Uncles is the Veterans Home Volunteer Coordinator. Mr. Davila suggested that each Commissioner review the Volunteer Application that was provided and to contact him with any changes. Discussion followed concerning the Department of Veterans Affairs Volunteer Services (VAVS) program.

Commissioner Spitzfaden questioned when the cafeteria will be open to staff and resident's family members. Mr. Reid stated that a special fund needs to be established by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). Mr. Carter added that the account is being set-up.

Mr. Davila questioned the status of the fence around the pond. He intends to meet with the City of Milford to inform them and discuss their commitment before September. Mr. Reid stated that the funds for the fencing have been encumbered and it should be installed shortly. Discussion followed.

Commissioner Newstadt questioned the status of the sprinkler heads and skylight situation. Mr. Reid reported that the sprinkler heads have been replaced underneath the skylights and they are looking into tinting the windows.

Commissioner Carroll provided information obtained at the Veterans Home Steering Committee meeting on July 11, 2007. Discussion followed concerning the budget and staffing positions. The next Steering Committee meeting is scheduled for August 1, 2007.

Mr. Citron updated the Commission concerning the outpatient clinic in Sussex County. The VA plans to lease their own building, hire their own staff, and offer more services than currently available. They are finalizing a lease on a building in Georgetown and still expect to move in by October 1, 2007. Discussion followed concerning staffing. The Dover City Planning Commission approved the contract to proceed with the facility. It is doubtful that they will meet the October date as previously planned; but they hope to move in before December 2007. Provided information concerning enhancements planned for the VA Hospital in Wilmington. Mr. Citron accepted another position with the VA in Philadelphia starting August 6, 2007. He thanked the Commission and the community for their support.

Vice-Chairman Ennis thanked Mr. Citron for his efforts and outstanding service provided at the Wilmington VA Hospital.

LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS

No report.

MONUMENTS & MEMORIALS

No report.

PUBLIC RELATIONS

No report.

PERSONNEL

Commissioner Lardizzone reported that they will be interviewing four candidates for the Equipment Mechanic IV position at the Northern Cemetery on July 25, 2007.

BY-LAWS

No report.

ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS

Lank (MOWW) – Reported that they recently had their annual picnic and will not meet again until September. He commented on the great show that was provided by the Korean War Veterans on June

25, 2007, Remembrance Day in Rehoboth. He provided a copy of the news article from the Cape Gazette.

Magner (AMVETS) – National Convention is scheduled for August 3-11, 2007, in Greensboro, NC.

Carroll (MOPH) – National Convention is scheduled for August 5-10, 2007, at the Westchester Marriott in Tarrytown, NY. There will be extensive ceremonies at the new museum on August 7th (National Purple Heart Day).

Lardizzone (DAV) – National Convention is scheduled for August 9-15, in New Orleans, LA. On August 11, 2007, you will be able view the opening ceremony for the convention “live” on the www.dav.org website.

Thompson (MCL) – Reported Jim Mau was reelected as the State Commandant last month. This month, a detachment from Dover will be going to Washington, DC, to attend the evening parade.

Ennis (KWVA) – Next Executive Council Meeting is scheduled for September 25, 2007.

Harden (WAVES) – They had a meeting on June 23, 2007. They are working on securing funds to purchase a bronze plaque for display at the Veterans Home. After 19 years of volunteering at the VA Hospital, Commissioner Harden stated that she was very sorry to hear that Mr. Citron was leaving.

Wasson (DELVETS) – Also attended Remembrance Day and it was a very nice presentation.

Endres (40 & 8) – Voyageur 244 and American Legion Post 2 set-up a program with the Acme Market in Dover to issue gift cards to needy veterans. They also collected \$2,550 from members for the Veterans Home. They replaced all the classroom flags for Towne Point Elementary in Dover. For the American Legion, Lyman Brenner was elected as the new Department Commander, replacing Don White. National Convention is scheduled for Reno, NV, starting in late August 2007.

Newstadt (JWV) – Thanked Mr. Citron for being the guest speaker at their July meeting. He commented that the State of Delaware JWV will miss him and that he made a great impact on the reputation of the VA. The JWV will have their annual picnic on August 19, 2007, at Talley Day Park. On October 16, 2007, they are planning a trip to the Veterans Home and the DAFB museum.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Commissioner Newstadt commented about the issue of removing the SSN from retiree ID cards at the last meeting. He recommended that we encourage our legislators (on the federal level) to do what they can to get that changed.

NEW BUSINESS

MOTION BY COMMISSIONER NEWSTADT TO SUBMIT LETTERS TO THE LEGISLATIVE DELEGATION TO ENCOURAGE THEM TO INITIATE LEGISLATION FOR THE PROTECTION OF MILITARY RETIREES AND ACTIVE DUTY MEMBERS BY REMOVING SSN FROM ID CARDS, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER SPITZFADEN, MOTION CARRIED.

**MOTION BY COMMISSIONER NEWSTADT TO APPROVE THE REQUEST BY THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE TO INTER THE REMAINS OF AMERICAN
CITIZENS AND CHILDREN RELOCATED FROM WHEELUS AIR BASE IN TRIPOLI,
LIBYA, SECONDED BY COMMISSIONER LARDIZZONE, MOTION CARRIED.**

Commissioner Lank questioned the status of LTG Duncan's request from the last Commission meeting in reference to the Delaware Military Heritage & Education Foundation. LTG Duncan submitted a letter to the Chairman asking for assistance with fundraising efforts and veterans organizations contact information. Mr. Davila stated that once he received a copy of the letter, he would respond immediately.

Mr. Davila, on behalf of the Commission, presented an aerial photo of the Veterans Home to Dean Reid.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING: August 28, 2007 (11:00 AM)

**LOCATION: Robbins Bldg, 802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100
Dover, DE**

ADJOURNED